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# Artist Eduardo Kac to Send a Hologram Into Space



BY SHANTI ESCALANTE-DE MATTEI July 28, 2023 1:50pm



Eduardo Kac, *Ágora*, 1986-2023  
COURTESY CELESTIS

**Eduardo Kac** has been waiting three decades to complete his artwork *Ágora* (1986-2023), which he designed with deep **space** in mind. Soon, the work will be launched on a rocket, along with the cremated remains of Star Trek's creator Gene Roddenberry, and the DNA of Presidents George Washington, JFK, and Dwight D. Eisenhower. These are coincidental companions, divorced from the art project — though, in art, context is context.

"I will be placing a physical artwork in permanent orbit in space and this is not trivial for space agencies, it's not trivial for private companies," Kac told *ARTnews*. "But for an individual it's even more challenging. All these decades, looking for access, looking for a way to complete this vision."

The Brazilian-American artist is known for his pioneering use of holography (which represents a variety of different techniques that produce that sci-fi darling, the hologram) to create holopoems, in which he utilizes holography to cast words and symbols in light. For *Ágora*, a plate of glass dipped in a custom emulsion was shot through with a laser that carved the work *Agora* (Portuguese for *Now*) in three dimensions. *Agora* is contained in the entirety of the glass, as in, any part of this whole contains the word, so the plate was then trimmed down to a 0.8 centimeter square. When a laser —think the kind at the end of a clicky pen— is shone through that small bit of glass at a 45 degree angle, *Ágora* is projected in cyber-green.

Kac completed that part of the artwork in 1986, but he had always envisioned *Ágora* in space, which by now is old hat for Kac, who has worked with the International Space Station and SpaceX. With the former, he sent instructions to French astronaut Thomas Pesquet on how to create sculpture using two pieces of paper, an “M” punctured with a tube, titled *Inner Telescope* (2017). The work, seen in its full form, is meant to recall the word “Moi,” French for “Me.” The work he is making that will fly with SpaceX is a nanofiche disk engraved with a series of symbols, titled *Adsum*, Latin for “Here I am!”. The disk will be on a lunar lander by Intuitive Machines that will be launched by SpaceX some time in early 2024.

For *Ágora*, Kac wanted to break new ground: deep space. He envisioned the work as a “potential star,” a piece of “anticipatory space archaeology” more likely to be discovered “by future, rather than contemporary, audiences,” as Kac [described in his website](#).

In time, he found a partner who could help make this happen, the company **Celestis**, which is quite unique in its focus. Celestis is not a space-mining operation, a billionaire’s pet project, or even a Virgin Galactic-type tourist vessel. It is engaged, instead, in funerary rites.

“We’ve been launching people’s cremated remains and DNA samples and digital messages for a long time,” Celestis CEO Charles M. Chafer, whose business first launched a rocket in 1997, told *ARTnews*. “We think of it like a time capsule.”

To be discovered by whom? Perhaps, by no one, no thing. Chafer says people derive a lot of meaning from the idea of a “forever time capsule,” something infinite and untouchable.

The Enterprise Flight, as it’s called, will be Celestis’s first deep space voyage, 300 million kilometers away from Earth, destined for infinite orbit around the sun, whose path will lie somewhere between Earth and Mars or Earth and Venus.

It’s difficult not to see the Celestis rockets and all they carry as an extreme luxury, bought in carbon emissions as well as dollars, meant to assuage some deep fears about our own mortality by caressing our sense of personal, national and species importance. Kac has a defense ready for this perspective.

“I had this vision in 86. I was 24. We progressively spend more time in space as a consequence of our drive to explore, to develop new circumstances for human experience, driven by science, by business, by politics,” said Kac. “Art and poetry will always be present wherever humans are, we have to think of a space culture that is created in space for space.”

Besides, he points out, artists on Earth use synthetic acrylics, all kinds of noxious materials. In the face of this important artistic mission, his glass hologram is not really a problem, he claims. At the end of the day, Kac believes art and poetry must go where people go. But where are we going?

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